

Class Discussion

Technology: Draft a short guide explaining a modern tool (smartphones, online banking, email) to someone who has never used it.

Employment: List five strengths a long-term incarcerated person might bring to a workplace.

Identify three achievable goals for someone in their first month after release.

Imagine stepping outside after 25 years in prison. Describe the first things you see, hear, and feel. What emotions arise?

Write about a moment in the interview materials that surprised you. Why did it stand out?

Choose one returning citizen's story. What part of their experience felt most challenging? Most hopeful?

Think of a time you felt out of place or overwhelmed. How might that help you understand a returning citizen's re-entry experience?

How does long-term incarceration shape someone's sense of identity? Write about how identity might need to be rebuilt.

List three systemic barriers a long-term incarcerated person faces upon release. Which barrier seems hardest to overcome and why.

Pick two stakeholders—returning citizens, employers, parole officers, community members. Describe where their interests align and where they conflict.

Describe a conversation between a returning citizen and a potential employer. What fears might each person have?

Imagine being reunited with family after decades. What might be joyful? What might be difficult or awkward?

What responsibility does society have toward people re-entering after decades? What responsibility do individuals have?

Reflect on the concept of "second chances." What does it mean in practice—not just in theory?

Draw or map out the first week of re-entry as a timeline of challenges and small victories.

Create a "Re-entry Welcome Kit." What items—material, emotional, social—would you include?

Rewrite a real interview into a short narrative, conveying the human experience behind the facts.

1. Anger Management

Reflection Questions

- What situations might trigger anger for someone newly released, and why might those reactions be heightened after incarceration?
- What does “healthy expression of anger” look like outside a prison setting?
- How might society misinterpret the emotions of returning citizens?

Activity

- Write a “reaction plan” for a hypothetical scenario (e.g., being disrespected at work, a parole office misunderstanding). Identify: the trigger, the internal feeling, and a constructive response.

2. Family Reconnection

Reflection Questions

- What emotional barriers might a returning father face when trying to reconnect with his children?
- How might the child’s perspective differ from the parent’s?
- What does a healthy first step toward rebuilding trust look like?

Activity

- Draft a short letter from the perspective of a returning parent trying to reconnect with a child. Focus on honesty, accountability, and patience.

3. Former Teen Gang Members

Reflection Questions

- What identities or beliefs might a former teen gang member struggle to let go of after release?
- What social pressures might pull them back toward their past life?
- What support systems could realistically help protect them during re-entry?

Activity

- Students map out a “fork in the road” diagram showing the two paths: returning to the gang vs. building a new identity. List the risks, motivations, and supports tied to each.

4. Pregnant Mothers in Prison

Reflection Questions

- How might incarceration during pregnancy affect a mother’s identity and her ability to bond with her child later?
- What unique barriers do mothers face when trying to re-establish custody or stable housing?
- What societal assumptions do people hold about incarcerated women, and how do those assumptions impact re-entry?

Activity

- Students create a “support” diagram identifying the people and organizations a returning mother would need in her first 6 months.

5. Elderly People Returning After Decades Inside

Reflection Questions

- What might be the most overwhelming changes for someone who hasn’t been in society since the 1980s or 1990s?
- What forms of grief or loss might they feel even as they gain freedom?
- How can communities adapt environments to support dignity and independence for aging returning citizens?

Activity

- Write a one-page narrative from the point of view of an elderly parolee on their first day out—what shocks them, what frightens them, what gives them hope?

6. “Lifers” Getting Out After Long Sentences

Reflection Questions

- How might someone who has spent 25+ years inside understand “freedom” differently than others?
- What internal conflicts could arise when trying to form new relationships without institutional structure?
- Why might communities mistrust lifers, and how does that mistrust shape their re-entry obstacles?

Activity

- Students create a two-column comparison:
 - Column A: The internal resources a lifer might have built (discipline, patience, conflict resolution).
 - Column B: External barriers they’ll face (employment restrictions, housing, technology gaps).
 Reflect on how these sets interact.

7. Universal Re-entry Themes

Reflection Questions

- What does “belonging” mean for someone returning from prison, and how is it earned or denied?
- How do trauma and resilience coexist in re-entry journeys?
- What assumptions did you have before reading these stories, and how have they shifted?

Activity

- Draft a short personal statement titled “What I Understand About Re-entry Now That I Didn’t Before.”